

The Role of Organisational Internal Ecosystem in Fostering Intrapreneurship Spirit

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This paper aims at examining the effect of the internal ecosystem which includes three organisational factors namely organisational climate, management support, and reward and resource availability on intrapreneurial behaviour among Malaysian workforce. Next, the study tests the effect of intrapreneurial behaviour on job performance. Data collection was administered between January and June 2011. Of 500 questionnaires distributed, 213 were found usable. Structural equation modeling procedure using AMOS package was employed to test the hypothesised relationships. The results indicate that “organisational climate”, “management support”, and “reward and resource availability” have positive significant effects on intrapreneurial behaviour. In addition, intrapreneurial behaviour is found to be positively related to job performance. Overall, this study offers valuable insights into the factors within an organisation that could foster intrapreneurial behaviour among employees in an organisation. The study offers practical recommendations for the top management to effectively ingrain intrapreneurial spirit among their workforce.

JEL Codes: L26

1. Introduction

The changes that are taking place in today's business landscape have exerted pressure for organisations to compete towards organisational sustainability by providing high quality and innovative products or services. In order to achieve this, organisations need to emphasize on boosting and enhancing intrapreneurial spirit among employees to sustain in a longer run. Intrapreneurship is perceived important, not only because it assists organisations to obtain a better competitive position but also contributes to the economy of a country at large. Even though it has been acknowledged that fostering intrapreneurial behaviour is imperative, the research on intrapreneurship remains uncharted, particularly in the context of Malaysia.

As for Malaysia, the declining trend in the ranking of Global Competitiveness Index, from 21st place in year 2009 to 26th in year 2010 (World Economic Forum, 2010), is a worrying phenomenon. A means to rectify this problem is via fostering innovativeness and entrepreneurship spirit among Malaysian workforce in order to enhance productivity and performance. Since private sector is the vanguard for the country's economic

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development, it is deemed timely that a study to be undertaken to understand the factors that contribute towards intrapreneurial behaviour in the private sectors. As such, the main aim of this study is to examine the factors that could influence intrapreneurial behaviour among employees in large organisations in the Northern region of Malaysia.

The value of this study lies in its effort to delve into an area that has been rarely explored in the context of emerging economies such as Malaysia. This study is different in the sense that it attempts to offer a practical guideline for the business practitioners in Malaysia on ways in which human capital can be further developed by providing a conducive internal ecosystem in an organisation.

The remainder of this paper is organized in the following manner; first, a discussion on human capital in Malaysia and the concept of intrapreneurship is provided, followed by a review of the organisational internal ecosystem that is conjectured as factors to boost intrapreneurship spirit. The research model is then presented, followed with the method section which illustrates the empirical study conducted. Finally, findings and discussion explains the results of this study, the limitation of the study and the conclusion section.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Intensifying Human Capital towards a New Malaysia

As reported in the recent Economic Transformation Programme Report, Malaysia strategic plan to transform its economy focuses on strengthening and intensifying human capital development (National Economic Advisory, 2010). Among the strategic thrusts proposed to intensify the human capital is to equip the human resources with necessary knowledge and skills and to make certain that the private sector is the vanguard of the economic development. As clearly highlighted by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak, Malaysia aspires to reach the highest standards with regard to the skills and knowledge of its human capital as well as to foster entrepreneurial spirit. The emphasis is given on the private sector especially the manufacturing industry since this sector is seen as playing an important role in providing or upgrading knowledge and skill of the workforce. In addition, private sectors are encouraged to foster entrepreneurship and innovativeness in ensuring the success of the economic transformation plan.

It is without doubt that efforts to boost organisations' competitiveness and success would have significant impact on the overall economy of the nation. In line with the Malaysian government aspiration to transform its economy by fostering entrepreneurial initiatives, it is deemed timely that a study to be undertaken to understand the factors that contribute towards intrapreneurial behaviour among the workforce. Thus, the main objective of this study is to investigate the organisational internal ecosystem that could influence intrapreneurial behaviour and subsequently examine the effect of intrapreneurial behaviour on job performance.

2.2 The Concept of Intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurship or entrepreneurship within existing organisations refers to employee initiatives in an organisation to start or undertake something new although he or she is not being asked to do so. Opportunity pursuit, resource acquisition, risk taking, proactiveness and innovativeness are believed to be the key elements of entrepreneurial behaviours in existing organisations (De Jong & Wennekers, 2008). According to the authors, there are several important characteristics of intrapreneurs which include:

- (1) proactive individuals who are self-starters or having an initiatives to generate the new ideas.
- (2) individuals who find a way to pursue opportunities regardless of the resources controlled by them currently.
- (3) individuals who undertake something that are considered “innovative” or “new” and their actions and behaviours often deviate from the customary ways of doing things in existing firms.

Gilberstson (2002) explains that innovation is a human process that is derived from creative thinking. Creativity is crucial in developing the intrapreneurial capability and it is part of the learned skill. De Jong and Wennekers (2008) on the other hand highlight that innovation is one of the important elements contained in intrapreneurship. They added that innovative behaviours consist of (i) Opportunity exploration, the initial stage of innovation process which is related to opportunity discovery of the problems that need to be solved or the conditions require immediate response for improvement, (ii) Idea generation, the part of innovative behaviours where creative ideas are generated, (iii) Championing, the stage where ideas are sold to others and finally (iv) Application, the stage where creative ideas have to be transferred into practical actions by exploiting the opportunity. According to Antoncic and Hisrich (2003), innovativeness is considered a subset of intrapreneurship however, intrapreneurship can be seen as innovation behaviour rather than on organizational innovativeness. Innovation behaviours from the intrapreneurship perspective include creating new business ideas and search for the activities which are illustrated as a departure from the customary way of doing things.

It has been stressed that organisation should capitalize on their employees' ability to innovate in order to transform the organisation to be more competitive (De Jong & Hartog, 2007). As stated, two core elements of innovative behaviours in contributing to the innovation process are idea generation and application. The first element encourages employees to explore the opportunity, identify the problem or performance gaps and try to produce the solutions. The second element allows the employees to implement the idea generated. Thus, in an organisation, the workforce could play a vital role in the innovation process by demonstrating the application-oriented behaviour via efforts such as persuading or selling the ideas to others and devoting to developing, testing and commercialising their ideas.

In invigorating intrapreneurial behaviour within an existing organisation where the workforce has no absolute control over the resources, it has been argued that the

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commitment of the top management in developing or crafting a “conducive” internal ecosystem is vital. This is given that a supportive environment is believed to enable intrapreneurial behaviour among the workforce to flourish. As such, the subsequent section explores the three important internal ecosystem within an organisation which include (i) organisational climate, (ii) management support, and (iii) reward and resource availability.

2.3 Organisational Internal Ecosystem

2.3.1 Organisational Climate

Organisational climate as proxied by the group norms and values can influence an individual's behaviour. Hence, if the group norm embraces intrapreneurship values, then individual who wish to remain as a part of the group will behave intrapreneurially (De Jong & Wennekers, 2008). According to Maslow hierarchy of needs theory, the need of belongingness and affiliation could motivate an individual to energize a specific behaviour that is acceptable by the members. This reflects the need to be accepted by friends at the workplace and the desire to be working in group with supportive team members (Ivancevich, Konopaske & Matteson, 2008). Applying the same notion of the belongingness needs, Gilbertson (2002) argues that in order to encourage the workforce to produce new ideas, a team within an organisation that appreciates the generation of new ideas and innovativeness should first be created. Simply put, the environment in which the workforce is in should be structured in a manner that intrapreneurship can be fostered.

According to Wunderer (2001), in a socially stable organisation, close internal cooperation and the willingness of the employees to work in a team within a social network are essential to bolster intrapreneurial spirit. Two important key elements to inculcate intrapreneurship behaviours are creative problem and operative ability to implement ideas. Team must be given freedom over how to complete their work in a self-organised way. The ecosystem with the organisation should encourage learning among the employees for developing new ideas, allow employees to make mistakes and tolerate for failure. As such, the top management can play an important role to stimulate and support innovative ideas via the establishment of positive organisational climate. A research conducted by Rutherford and Holt (2007) found evidence that intrapreneurship (or corporate entrepreneurship) that relates to the organisation climate in which the employees perceived as an environment that enable them to engage in innovative activities freely. The internal context variables such as communication climate and perception of co-workers also said to influence the intrapreneurial spirit among the workforce.

As also pointed out by Hornsby, Kuratko and Zahra (2002), organisational support is another important factor to spur the intrapreneurship behaviour (corporate entrepreneurship). It is seen pivotal for an organisation to provide a climate for employees to behave intrapreneurially and an organisational structure that the implementation and adoption of innovativeness culture. Moreover, it is believed that psychologically safe environment such as allowing individual to take risk in

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implementing innovative ideas and the absent of negative feedback will permit individuals to generate new ideas. According to Bhardwarj, Sushil and Momaya (2007), in a flexible organisational climate with allows work autonomy (discretion) in performing task or decision making, the absence of standard operating procedures, written rules and administrative processes as well as supportive organisational structure can encourage intrapreneurial behaviour.

2.3.2 Management Support

According to De Jong and Wennekers (2008), leadership is an influential factor that is correlated with employees' intrapreneurial behaviour. The leadership role in this context reflects the top management support to encourage the generation of innovative ideas and novel ways of doing things in an organisation. Their research shows that in order to trigger employees' innovative behaviours, leaders should be the role model and at the same time communicate to the employees that they support innovation. One of the practices that could be perceived as supporting innovative culture is consulting behaviour whereby employees are consulted before any changes that will affect them are made and incorporate their ideas and suggestions in the decision making process. The other is delegating, which refer to providing employees with sufficient autonomy to perform a job. Other than that, innovative role modeling is also an important practice whereby leaders themselves become the example of innovative behaviour. Finally, supporting for innovation practice can motivate employees via demonstrating friendliness, patience, listening and being helpful to the employees and allowing them to make mistakes and considered the mistakes as a learning process.

A study conducted by Holt, Rutherford and Clohessy (2007) found that management support and work discretion explained significant variations in fostering intrapreneurship (corporate entrepreneurship) behaviour. In another study by Rutherford and Holt (2007), it was found that he way leaders promote intrapreneurship (corporate entrepreneurship) and the diffusion of an entrepreneurial mindset within the organisation will influence the employees' behaviour. Management support in the form of supporting for change can encourage the employees to embrace intrapreneurship culture within an organisation.

Interestingly, as proposed by Chang (1998), one of the internal variables that could trigger intrapreneurship is management philosophies. Decision and beliefs of management will have significant impact on intrapreneurship behaviour of the workforce. This is later echoed by Bhardwarj, Sushil and Momaya (2007) which highlights that the interaction of management support and moderate risk taking can influence corporate entrepreneurship (intrapreneurship). The degree of willingness of management to promote the intrapreneurial behaviour in supporting the workforce has been considered as the best way to maximum outcome of corporate entrepreneurship. In addition, a research by Hornsby, Kuratko and Zahra (2002) identifies that management support is crucial in promoting the entrepreneurial behaviours among the employees. Management supports which include the willingness of the top management to facilitate and encourage intrapreneurial behaviours, e.g. championing innovative or new ideas, providing their expertise, tolerance to failure and encourage to

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take calculated risks to generate new ideas in uncertainty environment. Similarly, work discretion which is related to the autonomy or freedom to make own judgment given by the top management appeared to be an important element to trigger innovativeness. This kind of internal ecosystem is seen conducive to foster intrapreneurial spirit among workforce in an organisation.

2.3.3 Reward and Resource Availability

An organisation that promotes freedom for idea generation and at the same time allocate necessary resources and rewards for experimenting with novel ideas could facilitate creative and innovative process. According to De Jong and Wennekers (2008) the availability of reward and resources is one of the important factors that could encourage intrapreneurship. Time, physical and financial resources are required to facilitate individuals within the organisation to be involved in innovative activities. As proposed by Chang (1998), intrapreneurship may be influenced by organisational resources which are related to organisations size. Organisations that are large have abundant resources, thus can create the propensity to utilise intrapreneurship skills in product innovation. Gilbertson (2002) argues that innovation involves a range of activities which is very sensitive to resource allocation processes. Resources in this sense comprise of the authority to spend, access to the information needed, and bootlegging time.

In addition, De Jong and Hartog (2007) noted that to stimulate innovative behaviours, allocating necessary time and money are essential to implement the ideas generated by the innovative employees. Thus, the leaders should provide sufficient funding and other resources to encourage innovation behaviour. Besides, financial or material rewards also have been proved to have the influence on new ideas generation and application. In addition, Bhardwarj, Sushil and Momaya, (2007) also notice that one of the drivers of corporate entrepreneurship is rewards given to the well performed employees. Rewards can be in terms of recognition, appraisal or monetary factors. Thus to succeed in promoting corporate entrepreneurship, rewards system needs to be properly design and structure so as to entice and motivate the workforce to behave intrapreneurially.

Likewise a study by Wunderer (2001) unearthed that co-intrapreneurship (where team members are behaving intrapreneurially) could be successfully executed when there are sufficient stock of information, financial and technical resources to generate the new ideas. The author points out that the management should motivate and support employees to strive for "growth" motives (as indicated in Herzberg two factor theory) such as team motivation and offering challenging tasks to the workforce. Similarly, hygiene factors such as better work place or material incentive or reward system are also important to encourage the intrapreneurial behaviour (Ivancevich, Konopaske & Matteson, 2008). Thus, to motivate the employees, extrinsic factors must be incorporated with the intrinsic factors such as given recognition, challenging duties, meaningful work, increased responsibility and others. Given the importance of resource availability and rewards, these factors have been incorporated in the present study.

2.4 Job Performance

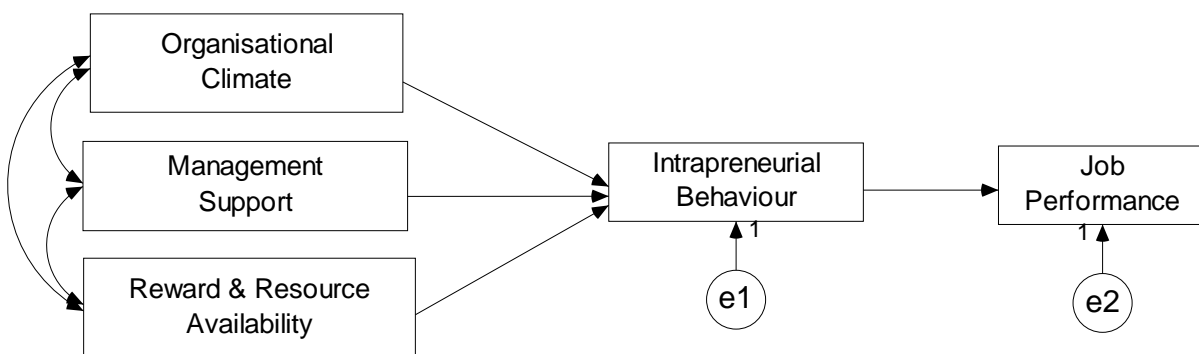
Job performance measure can differ along many dimensions due to different job categories that are using different criteria in measuring performance. The objective / subjective distinction is one of the most common dimensions. Objective criteria, such as production and quality indices, measure results, not behaviours. In contrast, subjective performance ratings are on a systematic job analysis and behaviourally based (Hoffman, Nathan, & Holden, 1991). Individual job performance can be measured by quality of outputs, job knowledge, leadership, judgment, innovation, goal setting or teamwork (Belanger, 1999). Therefore, each job category should have its own performance matrix tied to the organization objectives. For example, the primary performance measures for the factory supervisor would be: on-time delivery, first pass yield, quality cost, production cost relative to benchmark and to previous performance, employee training, process innovation, and product innovation (Atkinson, 1998).

According to Atkinson (1998), each individual should be evaluated using a set of performance measure that is broad enough to capture the main elements of the person’s job, but small enough to be manageable. Becker, Billings, Eveleth, and Gilbert (1996) assessed job performance via six items: (1) completed work in a timely and effective manner, (2) performed high-quality work, (3) completed tasks in an unsatisfactory manner, (4) quality of work, (5) quantity of work, and (6) overall performance. In Janssen’s (2001) study, job performance is classified into two dimensions: (1) standard job performance that refers to the extent employee fulfil organizationally prescribed work role expectation, and (2) innovative job performance which refers to innovative behaviour of the employee at work.

3. Theoretical Framework

Based on the preceding discussion, a framework is advanced for further testing (refer to Figure1).

Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Framework



Two main hypotheses were developed based on the framework proposed.

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H1: A conducive and supportive organisational internal ecosystem will have significant positive effects on intrapreneurial behaviour among the workforce.

H1a: Positive organisational climate will have a significant positive effect on intrapreneurial behaviour.

H1b: Strong management support will have a significant positive effect on intrapreneurial behaviour.

H1c: Reward and resource availability will have a significant positive effect on intrapreneurial behaviour.

H2: Intrapreneurial behaviour will have a positive significant effect on job performance.

4. Methodology

Data collection was administered between January and June 2011. Five hundred self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in different manufacturing organisations in the Northern Region of Malaysia, of which, 213 questionnaires were found usable. The organisational internal ecosystem that consists of organisational climate, management support, and reward and resource availability were measured using the Intrapreneurial Assessment Instrument (IAI) developed by Kuratko, Montagno, and Hornsby (1990). Organisational climate is measured using 5 items, management support is measured using 8 items whereas rewards and resource availability is measured using 5 items. A 5-point scale ("1= strongly disagree" to "5= strongly agree") was used for these three variables. Intrapreneurial behaviour such which includes innovativeness elements is measured using a 10- item instrument developed by De Jong (2007). Similarly, responses to these items were made on a 5-point response format ("1= strongly disagree" to "5= strongly agree"). Finally, items for job performance were adapted from Becker et al. (1996) and Janssen (2001). Similarly, responses to these items were made on a 5-point response format ("1= strongly disagree" to "5= strongly agree").

5. Results and Findings

The summary of the respondents profile is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Respondents' Profile

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	126	59.2
	Female	87	40.8
Age	20 to 30 years old	133	62.4
	31 to 40 years old	55	25.8
	41 years and above	25	11.8
Education Background	School certificate	2	0.9
	Diploma	4	1.9
	Degree	200	93.9
	Other	7	3.3
Marital Status	Single	138	64.8
	Married	75	35.2
Job Position	Department Managers	7	3.3
	Engineers	189	88.7
	Executives	17	8.0
Year of Service in Present Organisation	Less than 1 year	53	24.9
	1 to 3 years	92	43.2
	4 to 6 years	41	19.2
	More than 6 years	27	12.7
Nature of business	semiconductor	72	33.8
	hard drives and personal computer	66	31.0
	two-way radio product	46	21.6
	high end steel and precision tools	29	13.6
Number of Employee	799 and below	2	0.9
	800 to 1099	48	22.5
	1100 to 1399	32	15.0
	1400 to 1699	25	11.7
	1700 to 1999	84	39.4
	2000 and above	22	10.5

Table 2 below describes the result of confirmatory factor analysis conducted on all constructs. As shown, the cronbach alpha value derived for all constructs were all above the recommended value.

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Table 2: Result of CFA for Measurement Model

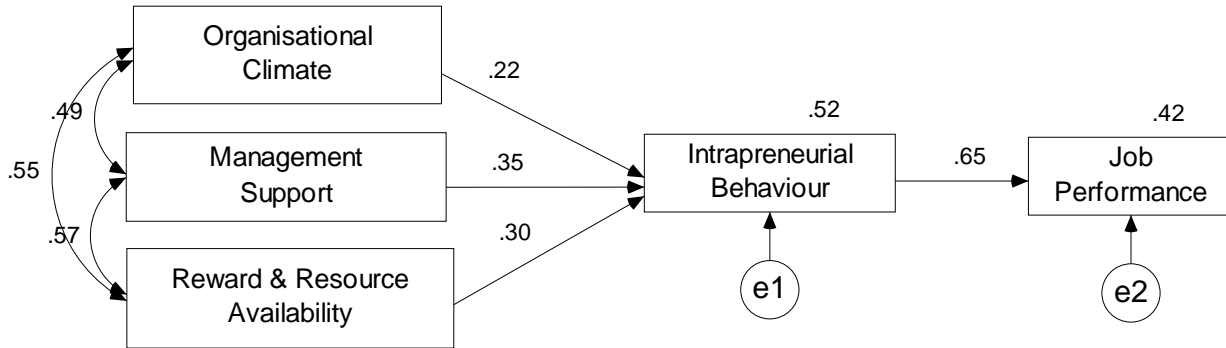
Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha
1. Organisational Climate	OC1	.72	.76
	OC2	.71	
	OC3	.64	
	OC4	.63	
	OC5	.61	
2. Management Support	MS1	.76	.82
	MS2	.74	
	MS3	.65	
	MS4	.65	
	MS5	.62	
	MS6	.50	
3. Reward & Resource Availability	RRA1	.77	.78
	RRA2	.69	
	RRA3	.67	
	RRA4	.63	
4. Intrapreneurial Behaviour	INT1	.79	.94
	INT2	.78	
	INT3	.75	
	INT4	.75	
	INT5	.75	
	INT6	.74	
	INT7	.74	
	INT8	.73	
	INT9	.73	
	INT10	.72	
5. Job Performance	JPER1	.81	.79
	JPER2	.80	
	JPER3	.77	
	JPER4	.73	
	JPER5	.72	
	JPER6	.71	
	JPER7	.67	

The model was tested using the structural equation modeling (SEM) procedure. The central point in analysing structural models is the extent to which the hypothesised model “fits” or adequately describes the sample data (Byrne, 2001). As shown in Table 3, the model yielded a moderate fit given the sample data of $\chi^2 = 29.95$, $p = .00$, $\chi^2 / df = 9.98$, GFI = .959, IFI = .953, CFI = .953, TLI = .842 and RMSEA = .082.

An analysis of the data using the structural equation modeling procedure, as depicted in Figure 2, showed significant direct effects of organisational climate ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$), management support ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$), and reward and resource availability ($\beta = .30$, $p < .001$) on intrapreneurial behaviour. The three independent variables account for

52% of the intrapreneurial behaviour variance. The effect of intrapreneurial behaviour on job performance was also found significant ($\beta = .65, p < .001$) and the variable accounts for 42% of the job performance variance.

Figure 2: Structural equation modeling procedure



Based on the findings, the factors at organisational level that could be structured to form internal ecosystem to spur intrapreneurial behaviours includes organisational climate, management support, as well as reward and resource availability. Interestingly, the present study revealed all the three postulated variables contributes to the development of intrapreneurial behaviour among workforce in an organisation. Clearly, this study confirmed the previous research that advocates the vital role of organisational internal ecosystem to invigorate intrapreneurial spirit among the workforce (see for example, Bhardwarj, Sushil & Momaya, 2007; Holt, Rutherford & Clohessy, 2007; Hornsby, Kuratko, & Zahra, 2002; De Jong & Hartog, 2007). Also, it is evident that intrapreneurial behaviour would eventually lead to better job performance among the workforce.

5. Discussion and Implications

Clearly, an organisational climate that forms a socially stable organisation, close internal cooperation and strong teamwork are essential for an efficient intrapreneurial practice. Team should be given freedom over how to complete their work in a self-organized way. The organisation environment should also encourage learning among the employees for developing a new idea and allow employees in making mistake and tolerate for failure. It is also important to note that leadership is an influential factor that is correlated with employees' intrapreneurial behaviour. The influence of leader behaviours in relation to the employees' innovation behaviours which consist of idea generation and application behaviour could trigger innovativeness behaviours and spur intrapreneurial spirit.

Apart from that, reward has been proved to have a direct influence on intrapreneurship. Rewards given to employees who behave intrapreneurial can be in terms of recognition, appraisal or monetary factors. Thus, to succeed in stimulating intrapreneurship, proper design for rewards system in the organisation is necessary. Moreover, availability of resources such as physical and financial resources are also crucial in promoting intrapreneurship. According to Gilbertson (2002), innovation involves a range of activities which is very sensitive to resource allocation processes. The resources

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comprised of authority given to employees for spending and accessing to the information needed. Organisation should provide sufficient funding and other resources to create the propensity in adopting intrapreneurship in product innovation.

The findings of this study have some important implications on organisations in their efforts to stimulate intrapreneurship. Insights obtained from this study will not only assist organisations to achieve competitiveness and sustain in the dynamic business environment, but also contribute in strengthening future economy in the country. In realising the transformation of Malaysia's economy, the private sectors especially manufacturing sector should foster intrapreneurial behaviours among the workforce to boost creativity and innovativeness and subsequently achieve organisational competitiveness.

This study provides a clear direction to the top management of the organisation in shaping intrapreneurial behaviour among the employees. Organisational climate, management support, and reward and resource availability have been proved to have significant influences on intrapreneurship. With this result, the top management should be cognisant of the fact that they should concentrate more on empowerment, provide necessary support and act positively to the innovative activities as well as encourage risk taking initiatives among the employees. In addition, in encouraging employees to behave intrapreneurially, it is suggested that the management should craft effective reward system such as financial reward, recognition and appraisal on significant achievements. The organisation should also ensure the availability of resources such as time, materials, and funds in supporting new ideas. All in all, the results of this study suggest that forming an internal ecosystem that is conducive for the workforce to behave intrapreneurially within an organisation is a wise step to foster innovativeness culture that could subsequently be translated into long term growth and sustainability.

This study is not without limitation. While this research makes valuable contributions, the data collection process depends merely on self-report data. Self-report was used as the source of all data for the measurement of predictor and outcome measures. This approach, even though criticised by some, was deemed necessary because of difficulties associated with the independent assessment of each of these variables. Furthermore, self-report is not uncommon in studies examining management behaviour, (Man & Lau, 2005). Having said that, future studies should endeavour to identify ways to obtain data on job performance from multiple informants to minimise the possibility of response bias.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is acknowledged that in a dynamic and competitive business environment, the organisation as well as the country is forced to foster intrapreneurial behaviour in order to grow and sustain its competitiveness. As identified in the present study, organisational internal ecosystem needs to be structured to allow intrapreneurial behaviour to flourish. Clearly, it provides an important signal to the practitioners to formulate a proper policy that could stimulate intrapreneurship. In short, this study provide invaluable insights into ways in which the top management within an

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organisation to strategise and encourage innovative practices and initiatives successfully.

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